

# Is this just a tax 0

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will face the massive bill after they get the reductions they are entitled to including the annual free water allowance of 30,000 litres per household plus 13 instalments of the 21,000 free litres per child under 18.

The Mahers have given a breakdown of the amount of water they use and, based on usage figures quoted to the Mail by Irish Water, they will use 1,108,510 litres between them over a year.

Mr Maher, 40, who works with the airport police in Dublin and his wife Edel, 41, who is a full-time mother, said that the charge is very worrying and they are unsure of how they will be able to pay it.

He said: 'It is worrying but at the end of the day the Government doesn't care, all we can do is face another bill now in the new year as best we can. At the end of the day we have no choice and we have to be good little citizens. My wife is awake constantly worrying about bills, but I've got relatively used to it - it's typical for Ireland.'

'There's no advice on how to conserve water, with all these additional costs if there's any tap dripping in the house I've to go and change them. It seems when you have two children it's fine, but Government policy is that they don't want us to have any more. It just seems they don't want large families. He explained: 'We're not winding up

these figures. These are the figures for a family of our size.'

He said that, with 15 in the family including sporting teenagers, they easily take 63 showers a week. And with their power shower using 175 litres per seven minute shower, according to figures provided by Irish Water, the family use 11,025 litres a week just on showers.

He said: 'Me and my wife shower every morning, obviously. The two teenagers would shower everyday before school and then again when they're back after training.'

'Down to Aisling they shower everyday, and under that we top and tail them all everyday and that would probably be the amount of one bath. Eoin does running and Aisling does gymnastics and, between them they all play soccer, football and hurling, so there's different outfits for all those teams. Every night we're running somewhere with them, there's training for at least one every evening.'

Their eldest child is Eoin, 16, then Cian, 13, Darragh, 12, and Cathal, 10, Conor, eight, twins Odhran and Oisín, seven, Fionn, six, Aisling, five, Cillian, four, Sadhbh, three, Caoimhe Mary, two, and finally Dáithí who is nearly one.

He said they use the dishwasher once a day, they flush the toilet approximately 574 times a week, and put on their 10kg washing machine twice a day. A typical water expenditure for one such load would be 95 litres.

'The dishwasher goes on only once a night, but we're constantly washing dishes. There's after breakfast, lunch and dinner at least every day that we'd be washing up a sinkful. Then the children drink an awful lot of water, and we're big tea drinkers. The kettle would be full between ten and 15 times a day in this house, depending on visitors, and the kids would be drinking two litres each at the very least.'

As for the 574 flushes a day Paul says the 'toilet is non-stop being flushed up stairs, so to know how many times is to ask how long is a ball of string.'

'There'd be at least eight flushes for the younger children, we're constantly being told to fill kids with water, and to be honest the younger kids would be flushing it way more than that. And

## 'Dishwasher is on only once a night'

they would be flushing it a few times every go.'

But the Mahers are not the only family to face astronomical water bills.

The Irish Daily Mail can reveal that - with the 577,865 Irish households who have children and the 208,718 families who have more than three children - families of four to families of 15 will be paying between €1,180 and €3,930 for their annual water bill.

Jean Shanahan from Fanningstown, Fedamore Co. Limerick fears she will be facing a 'horrendous' bill of up to €2,688. She told the Mail she's concerned about the figure that her and her partner will be paying, with two of her three children not coming under the free children allowance requirements because they will be over 18.

Jean's eldest daughter is 19 and a fresher student in University Limerick, still living at home, while her other daughter is still in school but will turn 18 after the capped charge has ended in May. Her partner has two younger children who visit regularly, but they get now allowance for them.

She says she has already made major cuts in their water usage, and she spends €416 annually on bottled water as she says her water is undrinkable.

Dublin mother of two Laura Haugh told the Mail her family of four will face a bill of €1,180.

According to Ms Haugh, the 'mum-in-residence' for Ireland's biggest parenting community MummyPages.ie, this new expense will now take up the cost of a family holiday for her family of four - if they can afford to pay at all.

And Fianna Fáil's, environment spokesman Barry Cowen said that many over-18s are living at home in college and not earning a living.

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High family costs: Paul and Edel with ten of their 13 children

## THE HAUGH

ACTIVITY

- A seven-minute power shower - 175 litres
- One full bath - 80 litres
- A single use of the dishwasher - between 45 and 65 litres of water
- A sink full of dishes - 10 litres
- A single use of the washing machine - between 45 and 65 litres of water
- One cooked meal - half a litre of water
- Litres consumed (drink)
- Brushing your teeth with the tap running for two minutes - 12 litres of water
- Flushing the toilet once - 9 litres of water
- Water used playing with children

## Cabinet must pay charges

THE Department of Finance is to put an end to a loophole letting Government Ministers avoid water charges.

It emerged this week cabinet members who maintain second homes would be able to write their water bill off by claiming tax relief on the maintenance of these homes under the Dual Abode Allowance.

But the Department of Finance has moved quickly to end the perk. A spokesman for the department said the Minister for Finance will bring forward amendments to Section 836 of the Taxes Consolidation Act to exclude bills from Irish Water as a deductible expense.

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